

Love

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Wayform number nine, love. What sort of person are you? I'm not asking, what is your personality type or your gender.

What sort of person are you? And I'm not asking you for your race or your job or your interests. What sort of person are you?

On the inside, have you ever grabbed an apple, given it a bit of a shine and taken a big bite, only to find that there's a grub in it? What sort of person are you? On the inside, behind the curtain, on the backstage?

Those of us who have been Christians for a while might appreciate the general answer, I'm a sinner saved by grace. And that would be true, but is that all you are? What type of person are you becoming whilst and having been saved by grace?

What sort of person are you? Bill Clinton, as the president of the United States, abused his office and the power differential, which existed between himself and a staff worker by committing sexual misconduct.

After finally being caught out, he said, my actions were out of character. Yes, his actions were out of character. He acted out of the character he had forged over time, a character that would in fact do exactly what he did.

You see, we always act out of character. Character is the sum of our habits. We act the way we have habitually learned to act.

What sort of person are you on the inside? Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they only washed the outside of the cup. But on the inside, they were different.

He called them hypocrites. Hypocrites in the first century were actors on a stage. They wore masks.

Jesus was the first person in history to refer to duplicitous character as hypocritical behaviour. What sort of person are you?

I would put it to you that the answer to this question for a follower of Jesus is, or should be, I am born from above, pursuing love. That's the type of person I am. This is the aim of the formation which is happening in me by the grace of God.

I am born from above, pursuing love. If you are a Christian, by grace through faith, love is the end goal of your spiritual formation.

One could absolutely argue that the glory of God, in fact, God himself, is the ultimate end of all things and our true goal. But in spiritual formation, it's also fair to say that in pursuing God who is love, we pursue love.

We are being shaped by grace, the word of God, the Holy Spirit, trials and temptations, suffering and holy habits. We are being shaped to be Christians who love with the love of God. John 13, 34 says, A new command I give you, love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another.

Love, like God has loved, is the mark of true discipleship. 1 John gives us a superb explanation of how God has loved. 1 John 4, verse 7, Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us.

He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him. This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. God has loved by sending his son to die in our place. The Holy One, the perfect son, gave his life as an atoning sacrifice.

God's love fixed our sin problem by paying the penalty for sin through the death of his son, our Lord Jesus, on the cross 2,000 years ago. This is love. Christ laid his life down for us.

What sort of person are you? Are you born from above, pursuing love? Christians who are on a journey of spiritual formation must first be born from above.

John 3 verse 3 says, Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. Born again in Greek is *genetheanotin*, which means born from above.

If you have repented of your sin, you have been born again from above. Your spirit is now alive in you and will live forever, born from above. Your heart is now renewed, not stony, but made of flesh, new, born from above.

Your will is now capable of following God's ways, born from above. It's who you are if you have placed your faith in Christ. So what sort of person are you?

I trust you're born from above, but are you pursuing love? Christianity is funny in some ways. We've been given everything as a gift.

We're born again. We have God who is love, Christ who is love in us, through the Holy Spirit who inhabits every believer. Yet we are commanded to seek God, to seek the Lord.

We have the Lord, and yet we seek the Lord. We have righteousness, yet we're called to be righteous. We are holy, yet we're commanded to become holy.

We have love, yet we're called to pursue love. Spiritual formation is ultimately a pursuit of love, God's love, expressed through our whole lives, our will, mind, emotions, body, social context, our soul.

And I'm thinking of the concentric circle diagram we've been using throughout this book. 1 Corinthians 14 says, Let love be your highest goal, verse 1. The Greek word means pursue, chase down love.

Make it your goal. Let love be your highest goal. With your whole life, you're already saved, born again, born from above, right with God, living forever.

Now, make love your aim, born from above, pursuing love. Of course, 1 Corinthians 13 tells us, love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. And now these three remain, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. Did you notice the text doesn't say, we are patient and kind?

It says love is patient and kind. And herein lies a profound truth for spiritual formation.

When Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile, to bless those who persecute you, to seek godly treasure, to speak truthfully, to not look lustfully, he wasn't saying, try to do those things.

He was saying, become the type of person for which this is normal behaviour. The task of spiritual formation is to catch love, to be the sort of person in which love resides and bears fruit.

When Jesus was about to die, and he said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. He wasn't trying to be a loving person.

He said that because he is loving. It wasn't an act. For Jesus to not say those words would have been the hard thing.

Spiritual formation recognises the Lord Jesus wants to make us like him on the inside, pursue love to catch love. And when we do, love will bear fruit in us. Catch love, which is best expressed as the life of God in the soul of a person.

Catch love and love will bear fruit in your life. When we catch love, love is patient. We find ourselves being kind and less prone to boast.

What sort of person are you? Born from above, pursuing love. Think about the aspects of spiritual formation we've studied.

Number one, the easy yoke. The way of the master is a learned way that Jesus teaches us. It starts with faith in him, born from above.

But the way of the shepherd, Jesus, is a way of love. We learn it and it takes work. The yoke of the ox, it's all for love.

Number two, known and loved. Romans 8 was all about our adoption as children of God. Believing, becoming, belonging, behaving.

We discover we are loved and filled with love that we might love others. Love is our goal. Number three, renewal of the mind, replacing lies with the truth.

Isn't that all about love? Are we loved by God? Yes, that's the truth.

Replace the lie of shame and worthlessness with lies. Replace the lie of shame and worthlessness with love and worth. And out of this truth, we love God and others.

Number four, the rewire principle. Repetition rewires the brain. Christ has changed you fundamentally.

You're born from above. These truths have to be used to rewire our thinking and our behaviour. Number five, the reframe principle.

God is good all the time and is working all things together for those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

We reframe our past with God's fingerprints and pre-frame our future with trust and peace so that we can take our eyes off ourselves to love others. The goal is love. Number six, the rejoice principle.

Contentment comes from knowing we are loved and cared for and forgiven and given a new life. Out of joy, we love. Number seven, rest.

We're born from above. New creations called to live in the rhythms of grace. We enjoy rest.

And as we rest, we share the song of the redeemed. I am not sovereign. I am not sovereign.

And with this unanxious presence, wherever we've been planted, we love. Number eight, limits and boundaries. Limits and boundaries.

We live within God's limits because his limits are loving. We impose limits on others, yes and no, for their good and ours. Love includes boundaries and differentiation.

Number nine, love. We make love our goal because God is love. What type of person are you?

What type of person are you becoming by the grace of God? We are born from above, pursuing love. As we finish, consider the seemingly beyond reach expectations of the Sermon on the Mount.

Do you think the world would have a lot of anger problems if love reigned supreme?

The Way of the Master as taught in the Sermon on the Mount specifically teaches that disciples who are controlled by the love they are pursuing will learn how to deal with anger and contempt. Love will temper and refine anger.

If love was pursued by humanity, considering Jesus' other teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, how many murders would occur if love reigned? How many divorces if both parties were committed to love? How much lustful sin if love reigned?

How much of the pornographic industry would exist if love reigned? How much of the drug industry would exist if love reigned? How much of the slave trade would exist?

How much poverty would exist? How much violence would exist if love reigned? How much greed and selfishness if love was our goal?

How much envy if we were controlled by love? How much eye for eye revenge if love was pursued as the highest goal? Why do we pray to love?

Why do we give to love God and others? Why do we serve to love? Why do we study to grow in our capacity to let God's love flow through us?

What is the goal of the spiritual discipline of silence? To understand love and be love. The goal of solitude?

Love. The goal of submission? Love.

The goal of worship? Love. The goal of fellowship?

Love. The greatest spiritual formation scripture we have is, I think, 2 Peter 1, verse 3 and following. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Verse 5, for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual

affection love. What sort of person are you? Born from above, a radical new creation, shameless and guilt free, free because the sun has set you free by grace.

May you know the peace of Christ as you live in the reality of being born from above and by the grace of God, may you pursue love. Amen.